

**CEOS Chair Report by Gregory W. Withee  
CEOS Plenary  
Colorado Springs, Colorado  
November 19, 2003**

I am delighted to be here today to share some of the progress we have made together this year. After becoming the CEOS Chair last November, I anticipated a year full of activity and promise...but in all respects, with your help, the past year has far exceeded these initial expectations.

This year we have coordinated a significant amount of outreach to both the satellite community and the whole Earth observation community. Not only have we focused on all the important reasons ‘why and how’ satellites provide invaluable information about the Earth to scientists and decision makers, but we have also concentrated on how Earth observation information from space can be coordinated with other data to provide a more complete picture of the Earth as a “system”. Let me take this opportunity to clarify that the idea of coordinated Earth observations has been championed by CEOS for a number of years, and this idea is something for which CEOS should be very proud.

Before I briefly talk about CEOS’ broader role in an Earth observation system, I would like to quickly finish a discussion I started with you a year ago. When I became the CEOS Chair, I shared my priorities with you for the upcoming year and discussed how I wanted to focus a good portion of our energies on a few key areas, namely:

- Satellite data utilization
- Follow-up to WSSD – specifically in the area of capacity building
- IGOS Themes
- Harmonization

For a number of reasons, I felt these areas needed our particular attention. Either the timing was right externally, and we needed to help others better understand the importance of what we provide – including specifically the societal benefits (utilization) of space-based and remotely sensed data; or, the timing was right internally, and we needed to capitalize further on the directions we were already going – such as with the CEOS WSSD Follow-up Program.

Let me address these priorities a little more specifically. As you are all aware, I enlisted John Townshend earlier in the year to conduct a study on satellite data utilization and make recommendations on how to improve the exploitation of space-based information in the future. With significant support from Roy Gibson, and contributions from many others in this room, John and his team looked at a number of factors that either supported, or inhibited, the utilization of Earth observation data from space. In my opinion, I believe this study is a significant resource not only for CEOS in that we now have a much needed compilation of detailed satellite data utilization examples along with a list of recommendations to assist us as we endeavor to better utilize our own satellite data. We need to continue to learn to take advantage of the synergies between satellite and *in situ* data. More data utilization means more demand for the satellite data our systems produce, and I am sure that issue concerns us all.

Furthermore, at the last CEOS Plenary, I think we were all impressed by the tremendous amount of energy CEOS contributed to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) under ESA's leadership. CEOS Members and Associates worked hard at WSSD PrepCon meetings and other gatherings to ensure that the value of satellite data and space-based information were well understood and included in the *Johannesburg WSSD Plan of Implementation*, affirming that satellite data plays a key role in the sustainable development process. Recognizing that this was a tremendous shift in understanding by the international community from the Rio Summit 10 years earlier, I felt that we needed to capitalize on this changing paradigm further and strengthen the relationship between Earth information gathered from space and the key role this information plays in the sustainable development process.

One of the most critical areas where science has not always kept up with the needs of society, especially in struggling societies which unfortunately do exist, is capacity building. This year, through joint efforts of the CEOS Working Group on Education and Training and the CEOS WSSD Follow-up Programme Module on Capacity Building, we have made significant progress in providing CEOS Members and Associates direct input from African users. This input will help CEOS better understand how we can more effectively incorporate sustainable development priorities in our current and future capacity building activities in Africa, and in other places on

our planet facing similar challenges. I would also like to compliment the progress made by the WSSD Follow-up Programme's Module 2 in the key area of water resource management, and mention to those who do not already know that plans are being developed to have a combined capacity building and water resource management workshop in the coming year.

CEOS has been an important part of IGOS this year. I personally have been involved in the successful launching of a much anticipated Coastal Theme. Also, in a couple of days, **three** IGOS Theme Teams will submit their Theme Reports during the IGOS Partners' Meeting, making this year – a noteworthy year for reaching key Earth observation milestones. For a number of external reasons involving the entire Earth observation community, I do not think the timing could have been better for this level of progress from the Partnership. On a personal note, I have enjoyed working closely with Dr. Walter Erdelen of UNESCO and Dr. Dietrich Leihner of FAO on these accomplishments.

My last issue concerned the “harmonization” of our Earth observation capabilities and specifically working to ensure that CEOS efforts are harmonized with those of the Coordination Group for Meteorological Satellites (CGMS) and WMO's Consultative Meetings on High-Level Policy of Satellite Matters. At my request, Dr. Tillmann Mohr has agreed to focus on this issue and he will be sharing his thoughts on this topic with us before the lunch break today. I am very pleased with the contributions that have been made this year by CEOS, and I hope that we will continue to shape and influence the larger “harmonized” path unfolding before us in the critical months ahead.

Let me thank all of you for contributing your time, energies, and even financial resources to the accomplishments I've mentioned. In the more than **35** CEOS-related events I (or my designee) attended this year on **four** continents, I have witnessed your contributions, and in some cases even your sacrifices, to push our efforts and goals forward. Together, we have worked with those very familiar with CEOS, as well as to those who through our efforts learned about CEOS for the very first time. Having this year alone given almost **40** CEOS briefings myself to scientists, policy experts, and decision makers, I know that my efforts are only part of the larger

picture of satellite information capabilities that have been communicated to the world by our organization.

That being said, I would like to specifically thank a few more individuals for their service to CEOS this year. Terry Fisher of the Working Group on Information Services and Systems, Yves-Louis Desnos of the Working Group on Calibration and Validation, and Sergio Camacho of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Earth Observation Education and Training have helped to move CEOS in some very positive directions - which we will hear about in more detail throughout the day. Likewise, I would like to especially thank the CEOS SIT Chairman, Tillman Mohr, for his diligence this year to bridge the activities of CEOS into the comprehensive IGOS framework. Additionally, I want to thank John Townshend of the Data Utilization Team and Michael Hales of the WSSD Follow-up Programme Team for helping focus CEOS Members and Associates on some much needed outcomes this year. We are all looking forward to hearing reports on these activities later in the day.

I would also like to thank the CEOS Secretariat which has worked closely with me over the past year. The Secretariat is really the skeleton of CEOS that connects the head to other valuable members of the body. Working together on a regular basis through meetings and telecons, we have effectively addressed key opportunities and actions related to the Working Groups, Teams, and other activities of our organization – and, I would especially like to thank those of you who had to either get up early or stay up very late in order to participate in these important discussions from your various time zones. Lastly, I would like to thank the NOAA CEOS Team that I led and met with on a weekly (and sometimes even a daily) basis, who have helped to organize our efforts on the goals we set out to accomplish this year.

Before I sit down, let me encourage CEOS, and particularly the future chair, Minister Xu, who is with us today, to capitalize on its current momentum and play an instrumental role in shaping the future of an integrated Earth observation system. CEOS, as a unique organization resembled by no other on the planet, has an important contribution to make over the next year in the development of an integrated Earth observation system (both satellite and *in-situ* based) through the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) which resulted from the Earth Observation Summit last

July. As I said at the beginning of my talk, the idea of integrated strategies and systems, and coordinated Earth observations has been championed by CEOS for a number of years. We have known all along that satellites have an advantage for global integration – however, we need to continue to push these concepts as we have always done in the past and move towards a more permanent arrangement as many of us have tried to do with IGOS. As I close, let me say that I look forward to working with and supporting the new CEOS Chair in addressing the challenges ahead.

## **ANNEX 1: CEOS Representation**

### **2002**

#### **October**

- 53rd International Astronautical Congress in Houston, (side-discussions with previous Chair, SIT Chair, and others)

#### **November**

- Frascati side discussion with previous CEOS Chair

### **2003**

#### **January**

- Workshop for proposed IGOS Coastal Theme (as CEOS Chairman and IGOS Co-Chair), Washington, D.C., USA
- IGOS Water Cycle Theme Meeting (as CEOS Chairman and IGOS Co-Chair), Bethesda, Maryland, USA

#### **February**

- CEOS SIT in Geneva, Switzerland
- US/French Earth Observation Conference in La Jolla, USA

#### **March**

- Awaji CEOS Utilization Symposium, Japan
- Meeting in Awaji with future China Chair, Japan
- CEOS meeting on Utilization Team Development, Awaji, Japan
- CEOS WSSD Meeting, Awaji, Japan
- CEOS/NASDA Session on Water, Japan
- CEOS Meeting with World Bank, Washington D.C., USA

#### **April**

- CEOS Utilization Meeting in Silver Spring, USA
- 11<sup>th</sup> Session on the Commission on Sustainable Development at UN HQ in New York, USA
- CEOS WGEdu Meeting in Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany
- Commercial Remote Sensing Symposium in Washington D.C., USA

#### **May**

- CEOS WGISS Meeting in Toulouse, France
- NOAA Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research Workshop in Maryland, USA

**June**

- 10<sup>th</sup> IGOS Partners Meeting in Paris, France
- CEOS Utilization Team Meeting, Paris, France
- COPUOS Meeting in Vienna, Austria

**July**

- CEOS WSSD Module 1 and 2 World Bank Meeting, Washington D.C., USA
- Earth Observation Summit, Washington D.C., USA

**August**

- Group on Earth Observations – 1 Meeting, Washington D.C., USA

**September**

- WGEdu Data Principles Workshop in Vienna, Austria
- Capacity Building Coordination Meeting in Rome, Italy
- WSSD/WGEdu Meeting in Rome, Italy
- CEOS Utilization Team Meeting in Frascati, Italy
- 54<sup>th</sup> International Astronautical Congress in Bremen, Germany

**October**

- CEOS WSSD Module 1 Capacity Building Workshop in Stellenbosch, South Africa
- CEOS WSSD Module 2 Water Resource Management Workshop in Morocco
- CEOS SIT Meeting in Darmstadt, Germany
- CEOS Cal Val Working Group Meeting, Beijing, China

**November**

- IGOS Coastal Meeting in New Zealand
- 30<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Remote Sensing of Environment Plenary Event, Hawaii, USA
- 30<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Remote Sensing of Environment Technical Session 39.1 Panel Event, Hawaii, USA
- 17<sup>th</sup> CEOS Plenary, Colorado Springs, USA
- CEOS Sit Breakfast, Colorado Springs, USA
- 10<sup>th</sup> IGOS Partners' bis Meeting, Colorado Springs, USA

